

*MURAT EMPEROR OF
FRANCE.*

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Since I have, with reference to Soult, touched upon the subject of his supposed ambition, I will mention here what I know of Murat's expectation of succeeding the Emperor. When Eomanzow returned from his useless mission of mediation to London the Emperor proceeded to Bayonne. Bernadotte, who had an agent in Paris whom he paid highly, told me one day that he had received a despatch informing him that Murat entertained the idea of one day succeeding the Emperor. Sycophants, expecting to derive advantage from it, encouraged Murat in this chimerical hope. I know not whether Napoleon was acquainted with this circumstance, nor what he said of it, but Bernadotte spoke of it to me as a certain fact. It would, however, have been very wrong to attach great importance to an expression which, perhaps, escaped Murat in a moment of ardor, for his natural temperament sometimes betrayed him into acts of imprudence, the result of which, with a man like Napoleon, was always to be dreaded.

It was in the midst of the operations of the Spanish war, which Napoleon directed in person, that he learned Austria had for the first time raised the landwehr. I obtained some

"Your Majesty will soon be obliged to have one of them (the Marshals) shot, in order to moderate the lofty ideas of the rest." Napoleon treated the matter lightly, writing to Soult that he "only remembered Austerlitz" (*Sauary*, tome iv. p. 200), but the whole matter seems to show that there must have been some truth in the reports of the existence of Republican conspiracies in the French army. The plan of Argenton, the officer who communicated with Wellington, was to let Soult proclaim himself King; the army would then revolt, not only against him but against Napoleon. This example being followed by the whole army in Spain, "the old army of the Republic and of the Empire, remembering what it had been, would be seen to abandon the Peninsula and retire to the Pyrenees, proclaiming the deliverance of France and of Europe." The plot of Malet in 1812 also points in the same direction. Meneval (tome iii. p. 73), however, denies the account of these conspiracies given by Nodier (in his *Histoire des Sociétés Secrètes de l'Armée et des Conspirations Militaires contre Bonaparte*: London, Longman, 1815); indeed Nodier is too imaginative a writer to be much trusted; see *McCrlet*, tome ii. pp. 72-94. Mejbternich (tome iii. p. 667), apparently not speaking specially of the army, says: "It was under the Empire, and as a consequence of the expurgations made by Bonaparte in the administrations, that the secret societies began to be reconstituted. Strong of will, Bonaparte calculated that instead of employing useless efforts to hinder their re-organization it would be easier for him to restrain them by subjecting them to a severe control, and even making them subserve his designs. Etence, while covering them with ridicule he managed to establish an active police in the associations which seemed to him susceptible of being guided; towards all the others, on the contrary, he displayed an inflexible severity."